The Urban Catalyst Concept

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Abstract:

Urban catalysts are new redevelopment strategies comprised of a series of projects that drive and guide urban development. Redevelopment efforts in the past, such as urban renewal and large-scale redevelopment projects, have often jeopardized the vitality of downtowns. The difference between the urban catalyst and these redevelopment strategies is that catalytic redevelopment is a holistic approach, not a clean-slate approach, to revitalizing the urban fabric. Many cities have considered urban catalysts as a means for revitalization. Among the most noted catalytic projects are sports stadiums and arenas: however not all catalytic projects have to be designed at such a grand scale, nor do all cities possess a threshold of support to successfully sustain such developments.

This thesis design project examines the significance of the urban catalyst as a means of urban revitalization. The urban catalyst theory says design can be linked to place through the study of contextual factors in urban design. These factors include: morphological, social, functional, perceptual, visual, and temporal. For the urban catalyst to respond to its setting it also must possess a strong sense of place and authenticity.

Each component of my research supports my position that each city has unique attributes that can serve as basic models or seeds for urban redevelopment. These components are used as a basis for developing a design framework that is applied to two sites in Memphis, Tennessee.

This position is tested through the contextual analysis and design of two projects that are of major significance to Downtown Memphis, Tennessee. The first demonstrates the role that Court Square plays as a critical social and spatial element in the revitalization of the center city. The second is the revitalization of the South Side Neighborhood, an area full of history and character.
For my Family
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Introduction: Chapter One

Downtown is the heart of the American city; it is the lifeline of commerce, government and social interaction. Downtowns are dynamic and therefore go through periods when revitalization is needed. Yet revitalization efforts in the past, such as urban renewal and large-scale redevelopment projects, have often jeopardized the vitality of downtowns. This paper suggests that an alternative strategy for revitalizing the center city is needed.

The federal urban renewal program, started in 1949, was meant to save our cities. The thinking of government officials was that a program was needed to “eliminate substandard and other inadequate housing through clearance of slums and blighted areas” (Anderson 1962 p. 2). These were to be replaced with new housing developments, which would bring reinvestment to the city. The problem with this program was not its good intentions, but instead with how the goals were accomplished.

The urban renewal program had a devastating effect on the supply of “low rent” housing and on the low-income residents who occupied it. More housing was destroyed than was rebuilt; the program demolished 404,000 low and middle-income urban units, replacing them only 41,580 units for the same population (Gratz 1989). In addition a majority of the housing that was destroyed was low rent housing, and the housing that was rebuilt was mostly high rent housing. Consequently housing conditions were worsened for those who were most in need, while housing opportunities improved for those who were already well served. Urban renewal erased portions of the dense urban fabric of American cities and caused social and economic problems due to the focus on business interests rather than quality of life.

Large-scale development is another redevelopment strategy often coupled with urban renewal that has been attempted in order to revitalize downtowns. In the 1960’s both urban designers and developers shared a mutual interest in large-scale developments. Large-scale developments, due to their size, were thought, “to increase the capacity to establish a balance of land uses” (Priest 1977 p. 4). This balance, it was thought, would maximize public benefits and minimize conflicts between land uses. Instead large-scale developments caused problems like “draw down” effects, where a project was developed on a site that was not optimal for that type of use. Large-scale developments are also more susceptible to unpredictable changes than are smaller scale projects. This is because large-scale developments tend to involve large financial investment in the early stages of planning and land acquisition (Priest 1977).
As an alternative to these redevelopment strategies I propose the urban catalyst as an effective means to revitalize the city. By definition a catalyst is a substance or vehicle that accelerates a reaction. In urban design, a catalyst may be conceptualized as a project that will stimulate future development. In the United States, catalytic projects are springing up at a fast pace in the hope that they will breathe new life into downtowns. Among the most noted catalytic projects are sports stadiums and arenas; however, not all catalytic projects have to be designed at such a grand scale, nor do all cities possess a threshold of support to successfully sustain such developments.

There are important differences between the term “catalytic”, as it is defined above, and the concept of the urban catalyst. The urban catalyst concept, developed by Wayne Attoe (1977), has a value beyond any metaphorical phrase such as “heart of the city”, a term that is often used to describe some catalytic projects. Many think of catalysts as super developments and this may be valid in some cases where there is strong financial backing and a solid public support. However it is more accurate to describe an urban catalyst as a smaller element or a group of elements, a building and the space around it, for example—which will jump-start positive social and economic redevelopment activity. An urban catalyst has a greater purpose than to merely provide a destination or improve the appearance of an area. An urban catalyst should be an element that is shaped by the context in which it is placed, and should in turn shape that context, with the purpose of reviving the urban fabric. For an urban catalyst to be successful, the catalyst must not be a stand-alone element, but rather an element within a framework that guides future development (Sternberg, 2002).

Urban catalysts are dynamic in nature; they are projects that have effects on their surroundings, with potential to address a range of revitalization objectives, depending on area needs. First, the catalyst should enhance the physical condition of the existing urban fabric around it; this may be done through redesign or renovation to make the fabric stronger. Second, a catalyst not only improves physical conditions, but these changes should also address the social, political, and economic context of the project. Third, catalytic reactions are limited in scope, thus they do not damage their contexts. The existing quality and character of an urban setting should not be jeopardized due to redevelopment; therefore catalysts should enhance the sense of place an area exhibits (Attoe 1977).

**Enhancing the Surrounding Fabric**

Urban catalysts have the potential to shape a city by a number of means. These are not limited to a single vision, rather this implies a holistic one. Attoe’s theory describes how to get from the goal of visualization to implementation of a complete project. Catalytic theory, however, does not impose a single plan of implementation for all urban areas. Instead, it focuses on identifying the viable relationships between new and existing urban elements and their impacts on the urban fabric.
This approach is known as an urban catalyst. Although the relationship between investment and development outcome is recognized, as Inam argues, “more understanding of the linkage between social, spatial, and economic elements in terms of urban revitalization is needed” (2002 p.5). When it comes to urban design there should not be one ultimate vision for the overall design of a city. Sternberg states, “there should be a sequential linkage of visions that have the power to invoke and sustain other visions” (2002 p. 34). Visions for downtown revitalization efforts need to be incremental, but should have a broad impact. A larger scale urban catalyst such as a shopping center, a waterfront development, or a rejuvenated historic district, can spur redevelopment and reintroduce vigor back into the urban environment. Catalysts of smaller stature such as street treatments or a pedestrian thoroughfare can provide design elements that can feed redevelopment projects.

Even though designers and critics claim that cities are being revitalized, there often seems to be a discord between new developments and local urban culture, in terms of physical character, cultural qualities, and social conditions. Designers and planners often look for the one project that will open the floodgates of development. The goal of these projects is typically short-term economic gain. However, these projects are often contextually irrelevant; they don’t fit in with the place, socially, culturally, or physically. Designers and planners must understand that urban developments need an effective contextual relationship to their surroundings. When a project is contextually relevant to place, it responds to all the dynamic interrelationships derived from its existing architectural, cultural, and spatial fabric.

**Study Topic**

This study examines the role that urban catalysts play in urban revitalization efforts. My position is that cities have unique attributes that can serve as basic models or seeds for urban redevelopment projects; I refer to these projects as urban catalysts. These catalytic projects will have the potential to serve as generators that will bring a variety of future projects and activity to the city.

Chapter 2 examines information that is pertinent to the topic of catalytic redevelopment. It describes the evolution of American downtowns and issues related to downtown revitalization. This is followed by a discussion of the catalytic theory and factors pertaining to it, and a description of urban design factors related to development of catalytic projects. Sense of “place” in the urban landscape is examined as it relates to factors that contribute to contextual compatibility in an urban setting. The fourth describes market factors that effect development.
Literature Review

Chapter Two
The Evolution of the American Downtown 1850-2000

In order to understand the factors that contribute to urban revitalization it is important to understand how the evolution of American downtown led to its current condition. This chapter traces the growth of the American downtown and identifies the factors that influence downtown development.

**Phases of Growth**

Most American city centers evolved during the last half of the nineteenth century, with a more identifiable structure becoming evident around the turn of the century. The American downtown flourished and only slowed its growth with the advent of the Great Depression and World War II. The American population adorned the downtown; it was a place to see and be seen, a place of commerce, and a place of liveliness. Downtowns reached their height in the 1950’s with department stores, diverse services, and skyscrapers contributing to an active urban fabric. Since then downtowns have been battling the rapid growth of suburbs. As a result of this issue, designers and planners had to adjust their thinking to recognize the reality of the American downtown in the face of new challenges (Ford, 2003).

According to Larry Ford there are six phases in the evolution of city centers that present a framework for understanding the American downtown (2003). These phases include inception, exclusion, segregation, expansion, replication, and redevelopment. During the inception stage,
the downtown of the early American city began to establish itself as a distinct place made up of defined spaces where people gathered and exchanged information. Ford suggests that these spaces included elite coffee houses and homes. Not all American cities went through this stage however; most cities were developed with business areas around the mid-nineteenth century. The second stage, exclusion, occurred when uses that did not contribute to the growth of the downtown areas were forced out due to high rents and social pressure. Segregation, usually in larger downtowns, occurred when functions were separated by type and rent. For example, areas for banking and government may have been located in different areas of the city. As a result of the consolidation of single use development, cities needed to expand, often vertically, which drastically changed the skyline of many cities. The stage of replication occurred when expansion became more difficult in the center city, and consequently development was redirected to surrounding suburban areas.

The final stage, redevelopment, where cities are rebuilt continuously to compete with suburbs for the highest level of activities, is important for a successful downtown. This stage is the most critical because in the hurried process to redevelop, many cities are quick to plant generic urban design projects in their downtowns that are not tailored to the specific urban conditions that surround them. This approach dulls the urban fabric, which forces users towards the suburbs to fill their urban needs—social interaction, commerce, and entertainment. Many of these suburban centers tend to use an iconic design language that attempts to mimic a city center, but these centers are not supported by population or building density, the traditional features that fuel the downtown center.

Factors Influencing the Development of Downtown
The story of the American center city is complex; there are five primary factors that are relevant to the discussion of urban revitalization. These include the influence of European forms; the development of special use architecture; changes in transportation technology, the influences of cultural values, and the economic/political system in the United States (Ford 2003).

Central business districts developed later in American cities than in their European counterparts, however their rate of growth was faster. This may be due to the fact that most downtown elements such as rail-lines, streets, and commercial areas were already in place in most American cities. Nonetheless most of the structural components that emerged in American downtowns, such as commercial waterfronts, shopping districts, and monumental buildings had their origins in the European context (Ford, 2003). Although these elements were present in European cities, they did not come about until later in American cities. This evolution of urban areas was directly related to the segregation of economic activity and land uses.
American cities along the eastern coast modeled their spatial organization and architectural patterns after European cities. There were differences, of course, especially in the form of the street pattern. Many American cities like Savannah, were planned according to a grid pattern from their inception. Others, like Boston, evolved from an organic pattern of streets into a grid system. Unlike European downtowns, where commercial districts were usually organized around market squares, commercial uses were located along major downtown streets in American cities. This arrangement gave American downtowns a linear spatial structure.

In conjunction with the street pattern the development of special purpose architecture also affected the character of the American city. Business districts evolved early in Europe where buildings were used to conduct business transactions. Soon warehouses and banks began to form centers of business activity and over time, the architecture became more function-specific and business blocks began to appear downtown in European cities. This change in the urban landscape, known as segregation, also affected the American downtown during the mid-nineteenth century. During the twentieth century, new innovations such as steel frame construction and the elevator made it possible for buildings to become taller than ever. As buildings became larger and more specialized in terms of use, land uses became more segregated. As a result of this segregation of land, people had to travel greater distances to shop and work (Ford 2003). This spatial arrangement led to more suburbs and a sprawling urban landscape, which had devastating effects on the social and economic well-being of the American Downtown.

The development of transportation infrastructure has also had an impact on the structure of the city. In the 1850’s, the horse car served as the earliest form of rapid transit in American cities (Ford, 2003). The horse car traveled on fixed tracks and could transport more people than other modes of transportation at the time. The horse car’s major impact on the downtown was its fixed tracks. Due to these tracks being in fixed locations, merchants saw high volume areas forming. These high volume areas became the best places to locate businesses due to the large numbers of people in the area. Eventually the horse car tracks gave way to the streetcar in the twenties and the automobile in the forties.

In some larger cities the traffic volumes were so high that city streets could not support transportation needs; hence came the subway and elevated highway systems. These new modes of transportation formed the basis of the multi-layered transportation system. Without multi-layered transportation, downtowns in cities like Chicago and New York would not be possible, due to the large amounts of infrastructure needed to serve the people as well as the vertical growth these cities supported. However the automobile was the transportation mode that had the most influence on the American downtown.
In conjunction with the automobile, the expressway of the 1950’s-70’s has had immense effects on the American downtown. As more expressways were built through the city, the areas around them changed. Downtowns became segmented, and people who could afford to move to other areas did so, leaving lower income populations in downtown areas. This population shift changed the economy, and social structure of the American downtown, and with it development trends. There are two major spatial configurations that are unique to highways: inner and outer beltways. Both of these configurations have varying effects on the city. The inner belt usually encloses the downtown so that constant moving traffic can avoid city streets. This isolates the downtown from areas beyond the inner belt, leaving a “no man’s land” of left over space. Areas that are defined by an inner belt are usually comprised of parking lots, remnant housing, and warehouses. This phenomenon is frequently reinforced spatially by a railroad. Outer belts connect nodes with a circular highway. The lands adjacent to outer belt expressways are often cheap and available in large quantities in comparison to lands located within the beltway. The formation of “edge cities” is a definite spatial characteristic of developments along outer beltways, much like Tyson’s Corner near Washington D.C.

Transportation is key in the revitalization of cities because it provides the means for people to travel in and out of the city. Transportation also provides spatial infrastructure in the city. Transportation types can often dictate the type of projects can be developed. For a project to be well served it needs to have a good transportation connection, be it road, light rail, or waterway. Land prices for a project are also affected by its relationship to transportation routes.

Cultural values have also played a critical role in the evolution of the American downtown. In America, the newest, biggest developments are valued more highly by developers and designers, than the more stable historic landscapes that can provide a lasting sense of “place”. Unlike other cities in the world, many American cities tend to lack prominent cultural symbols that evoke stability and place. Our cities did not evolve from castles or central squares that anchored cities in Europe. The American ideology of “newer is better” together with the influence of modernism in urban design and planning has devalued the traditional fabric of American cities, in favor of wholesale redevelopment, with prominence given to iconic buildings.
Policy also played a key role in shaping the American urban landscape. During the twentieth century a variety of zoning regulations were implemented that had negative effects on many downtowns. It was the norm to have single-use zoning so that specific land use activities were segregated. This geographic segregation made it difficult to convert buildings that were obsolete for one activity and ideal for others. The advent of building codes also caused problems for some buildings located downtown. Strict building codes made it difficult for owners of older buildings to obtain loans for improvements, because the strategy of the time was to let older buildings become derelict and eventually replace them with newer more profitable buildings. In the suburbs, on the other hand, it was much easier to purchase and develop land. This made suburbs more appealing to people seeking to start new businesses as well as maintain their existing business.

The result of the various influences on American downtowns vary by city; with the advent of the automobile and later the suburb, downtowns have been fighting for their livelihood. Thus it is important that more effective means of revitalization be implemented in our downtowns, to bring them back to the character in which they thrived. The urban catalyst is one such strategy that can foster effective change all the while promoting social and economic growth.
Urban Catalyst Theory:

Urban catalysts are projects, landscapes or buildings, which drive and guide urban development and increase the number of users in an area. A catalyst should be conceived of as a series of projects that revive the urban fabric. Sternberg (2002) notes that for a catalyst to be successful, it needs to: generate social and economic activity, be located near commercial establishments (single or mixed use), be within walking distance of other developments, and have strategically planned entrance and exit points that will shape pedestrian movement patterns.

“Activity Generator” and “Anchor”

Sternberg (2002) relates catalysts to “activity generator” and “anchor”. A catalyst is essentially an activity generator, but not all activity generators act as catalysts. A stadium, for example, may generate a lot of activity without spurring nearby development; hence it would not be truly catalytic. The same is true for a development that attracts users and vehicles that cause congestion without encouraging the traffic to “feed” adjacent areas. According to Sternberg, the designer must know when to reroute or deter activity that would jeopardize the catalytic intent of a project.

A catalytic project can be seen as an anchor when it creates traffic that allows other developments to survive. However Sternberg makes a distinction between the terms “anchor” and “catalyst”: anchor refers to a development that generates activity that benefits other businesses on the same private parcel. For example, developers often provide various benefits to anchor tenants, whose presence will attract other developments. In contrast, a catalyst’s traffic-generating qualities should stimulated development across private property lines.

Ways Catalysts can Encourage Development

Sternberg (2002) identifies five ways in which catalysts can encourage surrounding developments. Creating pedestrian traffic is the most important way that a project can encourage development. This occurs when a catalyst acts as a primary destination that draws people to an area, creating demand for secondary and periodic uses that fuel adjacent developments. This strategy can successfully provide a variety of uses that will extend the life of a development. Secondly, the development needs to be properly designed and linked to its surroundings visually and physically. Third, a development attracting pedestrian traffic can serve as an amenity even if the pedestrians do not enter it. A development’s character integrated with its ability to complement a streetscape helps create an amenity that spurs development. A development can also influence a one’s perception of an area if it survives in an
area previously noted as derelict. Lastly is the relevance of the project relative to its location—for example, an art theater in a district known for its artisans.

**Spatial Conditions of Urban Catalysts**

A catalyst is also characterized by certain spatial conditions (Sternberg from Brown, 1994). The development needs to be near commercial activity that could benefit from the catalytic effect. An example of this is the redevelopment of Ghirardelli Square in San Francisco, which had a spin-off effect fueling the subsequent redevelopment of the Cannery, a similar upscale retail and office redevelopment. This is especially true for retail developments to maximize on potential income; other types of catalysts need to be within walking distance of similar developments that will benefit from increased pedestrian and vehicular volumes. This distance can range from a 5-10 minute walk for pedestrians, to a mile or greater for vehicles. The distance between catalytic developments also needs to be short enough to maintain a concentration of activity venues. Thus catalysts need to be within walking distance of each other or be linked by public transit. This is critical because once a person gets into their car they are far less likely to patronize a nearby venue, since their range of convenience has expanded due to the automobile. Therefore it is imperative that catalysts be arranged in such a way as to capitalize on pedestrian movement.

Since pedestrian flow is critical in how a catalyst functions, it is important that entrance and exit points are carefully planned to capitalize on users as they leave and enter spaces. This will shape the pattern of pedestrian traffic between developments. Street vitality is very important in attracting new people to an area, thus the flow of people from a catalyst to linked venues must generate a healthy density of pedestrians.
Contextual Factors:

Comprehensive analysis of the project context is necessary to insure that an urban catalyst will fit the physical and spatial context which it occupies. Among the critical contextual considerations are morphological, perceptual, social, visual, functional, and temporal factors. This section describes these contextual factors in relationship to the design and development of successful catalytic projects.

The discussion of morphological factors focuses on the layout and form of streets and the pattern of urban blocks. Perceptual factors address responses to how people observe, understand, and add meaning to the urban environment. The social factor, introduces key issues concerning the relationship between space and society. The visual factor pertains to the visual experience of the urban environment. Function strongly supports urban design as a design process; because design criteria must be met simultaneously to insure the design responds to its context. Time involves cyclical changes and changes that unfold progressively, hence designers need to understand the impact time has on places. This framework for urban design is helpful in the understanding the complexity of the urban environments that form the settings for urban catalyst projects.

Morphological Factors

The morphological dimension of public space deals with the configuration of urban form and space, an important factor in understanding the spatial structure surrounding a catalytic project. Most American downtowns are characterized by a concentration of two urban space systems, traditional and modernist. Traditional urban space is comprised of spaces defined and enclosed by blocks, where buildings make up the majority of the urban block. Modernist urban space is usually made up of freestanding buildings located within the landscape. During the modernist design period, public space changed morphologically in two key ways (Pope, 1996, Bentley, 1998). The first change was the transition from buildings as elements in urban blocks that defined streets and squares, to freestanding buildings in blank space. This was a defining transition in public space structure (Carmona et. al 2003). Modernists were known for designing buildings in which the internal spaces dictated external form. Modernist urban space was intended to flow around buildings rather than be contained by them. The shift towards freestanding buildings was also fueled by the desire for buildings to be distinctive. Prior to the modernist period only a handful of building types, town halls, churches, used this method of gaining distinctiveness. These building types were public rather than
private and served an important purpose for the city and its people.

Freestanding buildings played a key role in the character of public space. As a result, public space changed from defined spaces like streets and squares to formless spaces. This led to the loss of spatial coherence in cities, as they were increasingly made up of formless spaces punctuated by monumental buildings. The second change saw small-connected street grids become road networks that segregated the city. An awareness of morphological characteristics of the context of a catalytic project can help designers respond to patterns of change in the urban environment.

There is a preference for permeable street layouts in urban design. Urban patterns that are composed of small blocks have a fine urban grain, while patterns with fewer, large blocks have a more coarse urban grain. Smaller blocks have more permeability and offer more circulation choices in the urban fabric. A fundamental distinction in street patterns can be determined by the geometric regularity of ideal grids or the irregularity of organic grids. In his research, Hillier (1993) discusses the relationship between evolution of the grid and movement in urban environments. Hillier’s main point is that movement plays a large role in the spatial configuration of urban space. The awareness of street patterns provides designers the opportunity to make changes in the street pattern if needed to make projects fit their context better.

Due to a shift in contemporary urban design, projects are currently envisioned in terms of blocks defining space. The configuration of urban blocks is critical in establishing the pattern of pedestrian and vehicular movement in developments. Working on the configuration of blocks is a good way to achieve coherent urban form (Barnett 1982 from Carmona et. al). Since the block pattern forms an essential part of the urban fabric, the configuration of blocks should be designed to respond to the morphological dynamics of the city. Block sizes should also be balanced. A range of block sizes, determined by the local context, provides the best opportunity for a variety of land uses and building types, which supports catalytic activity.

From this discussion about urban morphology, one can derive some principles that can ensure contextual compatibility with the existing fabric. For a development to fit contextually there needs to be an understanding of how the site and the adjacent area evolved. Street blocks need to be permeable enough to allow circulation options for pedestrians. Catalytic developments need to be able to accommodate and integrate various movement systems while supporting economic and social activity.
Perceptual Factors

The perceptual dimension of urban design, deals with one’s awareness and appreciation of place. There is an enormous body of research available about people’s perceptions of the urban environment. The environment affects us and in turn, we affect it. For this process to happen, we must perceive and be stimulated by sensory stimuli. These offer us cues about our environment and are usually appreciated as a whole. Stimuli can be individually singled out by selective attention. For most people, vision is the most dominant sense, but our environment is not merely perceived visually. Bacon (1974) argued, “the changing visual picture was only the beginning of the sensory experience…” (89). The non-visual sensations and perceptions are often underdeveloped despite their contributions to place experience (Lang. 1994).

Perception is more than just responding to stimuli; it is a complex process of actually understanding stimuli. There are four dimensions of perception that work simultaneously (Ittleson, 1978 from Carmona et. al). The cognitive dimension enables us to make sense of the environment through thinking and organizing information. The affective dimension processes the stimuli which affect our feelings and vice versa. The interpretative dimension refers to meanings that we obtain from the environment by relying on memory to compare new stimuli. The last dimension, evaluative, assimilates our preferences of good and bad.

Perception is socially and culturally learned. Although sensations are similar for everyone, people filter, organize and react differently to them. These differences depend on a person’s age, gender, ethnicity and lifestyle. Kevin Lynch’s work in urban imagery during the 1960’s provided a breadth of knowledge about how we read the city. Lynch’s main argument was that we navigate the city better when we can organize and construct mental images of it. This led to the concept of imageability, the potential that an object has to evoke strong images. He later defined five key physical elements that contributed to the image of the city: paths, nodes, edges, districts, and landmarks. These elements are the perceptual building blocks that designers utilize in urban designs.

A catalyst needs to be able to be perceived by its users. Catalysts should have enough imageability that the project will become engrained in one’s cognitive map of the city, district, and neighborhood. Catalytic developments should be legible enough so that people perceive what the project means not only to them, but to the context as well. This center will be beneficial to people in different ways, this difference can become the seed of interaction later on. This shows how interrelated the urban design factors are.
Social Factors

Social factors of urban design deal with the connection between space and society. It is difficult to visualize space without social content and equally difficult to visualize society without a spatial component. This connection is best conceived as a two-way process where people create and modify spaces while simultaneously being influenced by space. In their research, Dear and Wolch (1989 from Carmona et. al) argue that social relations can be mediated, contained, and constituted by space. Thus, urban designers can influence patterns of human activity by shaping the built environment. This section will focus on the relationship of people and space and the concepts of public realm and public life.

The relationship of people and space is important in urban design. It is vital to note that people are not passive; we influence the environments in which we live as they influence us. This two-way process reveals that our behavior is situational; it is embedded in physical, cultural, perceptual and social contexts and settings (Carmona, 2003). Jan Gehl (1996) developed an approach to understand the way design influences behavior. He argues that design of an urban setting, within certain limits—climatic, social, and regional—can influence the number of people and their duration in the space. Gehl goes on to classify outdoor activities into three groups: necessary, optional, and resultant. Critics of Ghel's argument state that in spaces that are poorly designed, only necessary activities occur. However, in spaces that offer more choice, people may engage in optional activities as well as necessary ones. Furthermore, resultant activities depend on the presence of others in public space and are supported when necessary and optional activities are given better conditions. Drawing from this, the choices that people make are greatly influenced by their environment, thus catalytic projects need to be strategically planned in terms of activities and the arrangement of those activities.

The social context for urban revitalization cannot take place without discussing the public realm and public life. Loukaitou-Sideris and Banerjee (1998) note that public life involves universal contexts, unlike private space that is usually controlled by an individual. The public realm functions as a common ground for interaction and communication and as a stage for social activities. The public realm, as noted by many writers, is declining in significance, in relation to the private realm. Ellin (1996) attributes this to the transition of once public activities to the private realm. On a general note, this disengagement from public space is a consequence of privatization of public space. Ellin (1999) further noted that as the public realm became more individualized, a decline of meaningful space occurred, which led to a desire to privatize public space. This is evident in the public spaces that are developed by private agencies, such as corporate plazas that are closed off, or have their own set of “behavioral” rules associated with them. This implies that catalytic projects should provide public spaces for users.
As stated earlier, catalysts are shaped by their context and in turn shape their context. This is also true in terms of the social stage that a catalyst can create. Streets, squares, and other public spaces should be designed in a manner to capitalize on flow of movement between catalytic developments, by providing spaces that are meant as movement corridors as well as spaces that are meant to hold users and allow more interaction.

**Visual Factors**

According to Carmona et al. (2003), the aesthetic appreciation of the urban environment can be broken down into two parts: visual and kinesthetic. The design of urban catalytic projects should provide for both experiences. Visual awareness is a product of the influences of perception and cognition. This information greatly influences how we feel about an environment and what it means to us. In his research, Nasar (1998 from Carmona et al.) identified five attributes of “liked” spaces derived from users’ perceptions. People tended to like environments that had a degree of naturalness, that were kept up, that were defined but had a degree of openness, that had order, and that had historical significance. These attributes demonstrate how aesthetics are closely related to socially and culturally related issues.

The kinesthetic experience relates to how one moves through space, including the awareness of movement of the entire body (Carmona et al. 2003). Gordon Cullen’s work on how people experience space through unfolding sequences is a great example of spatial dynamics documentation. Cullen’s concept of ‘serial vision’ states that experience consists of a sequence of surprises highlighted by the excitement of juxtaposition (1961). Cullen’s work hinted at a sense of being in a place “here” and also the sense that outside it are other spaces “there”, and the tension between the two.

The advent of new modes of transportation allowed additional ways to perceive the urban landscape, as viewers could see at different speeds and with different levels of engagement (Carmona et al. 2003). The pedestrian has the freedom to stop and interact with his surroundings. Drivers, on the other hand, see the landscape through the windshield and at speed, but they have to concentrate on the act of driving. Passengers in cars also view the landscape through the windshield but have more freedom to observe the environment than the driver. However, both passenger and driver view the environment at the same level of interaction.

Outdoor spaces can be conceived of in terms of positive and negative space. Positive space has a definite shape and boundaries. The shape of positive space is as important as that of the buildings that surround it. Negative space, on the other hand, lacks a definite shape and leaks at the edges. Trancik makes a good distinction between hard space, usually bounded by architectural walls and soft spaces like greenways and gardens, which have less enclosure. (1986) Although positive space comes in various
shapes and sizes, the two main positive spaces are streets and squares. Streets are dynamic spatial corridors of movement, while squares are more static with less sense of movement. Streets and squares can be characterized in two ways—formal and informal. Formal spaces tend to have a strong sense of enclosure and symmetry. Informal spaces have a more tranquil character with more of an asymmetrical layout. A clear distinction between street spaces and square space can be seen through width to length ratios. A ratio that is larger than 1:3 begins to suggest more dynamic movement as one axis dominates the other. This ratio defines the upper proportional limit of a square and conversely the lower limit of street (Carmona et. al 2003).

Urban catalysts need to provide movement cues for users by providing sequences of spaces for people to navigate through. This sequence should allow people the chance to reflect on what they have experienced as well as speculate on what is coming up in the sequence. Catalysts should also take advantage of alternative modes of transportation; trams and trolleys, that have the potential to provide the movement of users through the catalytic developments, much like the public transit along Denver’s 16th street mall.

**Functional Factors**

The functional dimension of urban spaces deals with how places work and how urban designers can make spaces better. Much as how the success of a place is determined by its ability to facilitate activities, the design of urban spaces should be informed by the ways in which people use them. Bacon (1974) argues that through first hand experience, a designer can begin to understand an urban space. A designer should examine the relationship between activities and spaces. The observation of place is an extremely important tool for designers to use, because when we learn how spaces are used (rather than speculating on how we think they are used) our design efforts will be more successful. This is critical for the development of an urban catalyst project, especially in how the project will function within its context.

On the use of urban spaces, Carr (et. al 1992) derived five needs that people seek to satisfy in urban public space—comfort, relaxation, passive engagement, active engagement, and discovery. Comfort is necessary for a space to be successful. This can be measured by the length of time that a person stays in a space. Sense of comfort includes environmental factors, physical comfort, and social and psychological comfort. Relaxation is the state where the mind and body are at ease; site elements such as greenery, water features, and trees make it easier for people to relax. Passive engagement, such as people watching, involves encountering a setting without becoming actively engaged.
Whyte (1980) found through his research that people attracted other people. Active engagement usually involves a more direct experience with a place and the people within it. This is not easily accomplished because the simple proximity of people does not foster interaction. For interaction to occur, the designer needs to provide external stimuli that will prompt people to talk to strangers. Whyte calls this process “triangulation”. The inclusion and arrangement of site elements, such as benches, sculptures, and fountains can foster social interaction especially along routes between urban catalysts.

Landscape discovery relies on the management and animation of public space. Discovery may also require some sense of unpredictability. Zukin (1995) and others have written a great deal about liminal spaces—those that are formed from everyday life where different cultures interact. Animation in design also relates to discovery. For example, art exhibits, festivals, and parades can add to the discovery. Moving through space is an important factor in the experience of urban space and is closely related to desire lines. Duany (2000 pg. 64) states, “pedestrian life cannot exist in the absence of worthwhile destinations that are easily accessible on foot…” Simply put there is no reason to walk if the streets are void of elements that will convey movement and mystery. To be able to successfully design a public space, the movement through it and adjacent spaces is needed. This is important for pedestrian movement, especially in the connection between places. These connections need to be integrated into the local movement patterns of an area.

The journey a pedestrian takes is rarely single-purpose; thus, designers need to capitalize on the potential for pedestrians to partake in optional activities. Hillier (1996) calls this the “by-product” of movement and further argues that this can be accomplished by routing pedestrian movement past outward facing building blocks with a high level of visual permeability. The configuration of the urban grid plays a significant role in the movement of pedestrians. Pedestrian movement can be broken down into three parts—origin, destination, and by-product spaces (Hillier, 1996). No matter the location of the origin or destination, some routes have more potential to spur contact than others because of by-product potential. Thus it is imperative to prioritize catalytic development on the urban grid that has the most potential to generate interactive uses. This development prioritization is related to land use, especially dealing with magnets and attractors in urban space.

The types and density of uses in an urban environment is an indicator of vitality. A key aspect of a widely used neighborhood or district is the concentration of land uses and activities spatially and temporally. Mixed-use zoning is a response to the sterile functional zoning of post-war development planning. There are two types of mixed uses, 1) by having a mix of buildings of a single use or 2) having buildings in that contain a mix of uses. Jane Jacobs (1961 p. 155) argued that the vitality of a city district or neighborhood depends on the overlap of activities
Catalysts need to respond to the basic needs people seek to satisfy in urban space: comfort, relaxation, passive and active engagement, and discovery. By responding to these needs a catalyst can offer a variety of uses and have a higher possibility to generate activity. Activity generation also depends on the configuration of projects, thus catalytic projects with the highest potential to generate interaction between people should be placed to capitalize on the movement of pedestrians and other modes of transportation. A catalyst should embrace a variety of activities and uses; this variety will strengthen the vitality of not only the new project but the surrounding area as well.

**Temporal Factors**

Time plays an important role in the experience of place. As time passes environments gain a richness of being used and lived in. Kevin Lynch (1972, p.65) identified two ways that we experience time in the urban environment: 1) through progressive change the growth and decay of an environment, and 2) through rhythmic repetitions—the cycles of the moon and sun, breathing, hunger. This perspective provides the basis for Lynch’s argument that time and place construct “the framework within which we order our experiences (1972, p.241)” Rhythmic repetition is the first way we know that time has passed. The most dominant natural cycle is the 24-hour circadian cycle that is tied to the earth’s rotation. This cycle affects our daily activities. The yearly cycle and seasonal changes also affects our activities according to the tilt of the earth, sun exposure and length of days. To encourage the use of urban spaces designers need to understand the effect cycles have on the seasons and night and day. Urban spaces are used and perceived differently according to the time of day. As Carmona argues (2003 et.al) designers can benefit from the investigation of a space’s changing rhythms and pulses. Seasonal cycles have a profound effect on the way spaces are used. Designers may play on this to exploit seasonal changes to bring variety to urban spaces.

Not all time cycles that affect our lives have a relationship to natural cycles. Zebrubavel (from Carmona 2003 et.al) claims that a number of our daily activities are now being structured by mechanical time. He suggests that “we are detached from ‘natural periodicity’ and are replacing it with ‘perfunctory periodicity’ as dictated by our schedules, clocks, and calendars” (from Carmona 2003 et.al p. 194). Krietzman argues that we are now shifting into a 24-hour society in which “the time structures that regimented our lives are breaking down” (1999, p.2). As a result, the patterns of users’ activities in regards to time are being altered, which provides urban designers the opportunity to extend the design uses to other parts of the day.

As stated earlier in this paper, mixed-uses are known to create more life in urban areas, but activities need to be pondered in terms of time as well. Urban designers need to understand activity patterns and ways to encourage activities during different times. Krietzman (1999) argues that buildings and spaces in today’s
society need to be poly-chronic, that is, they should have more than one use to achieve a sense of vitality, rather than being mono-chronic, with single use spaces and buildings. Urban vitality is strongly stimulated by the animation that an area has. Montgomery (1995) stresses the importance of soft and hard infrastructure in urban spaces. Soft infrastructure relates to the programs and activities that occur in and around a space and hard infrastructure relates to the buildings, spatial designs, and streets that make up a place. These two types of infrastructure need to be integrated in such a way to foster synergy in the urban environment.

As well as repetitive rhythms of time, time also passes through progressive or permanent change. Urban environments are continuously changing. Economic, social, and cultural forces, from design to demolition, affect the urban environment. Any change in the physical fabric of a place is recorded in that place’s history. Therefore all urban design developments contribute to the evolving urban time line. The concepts of resiliency and robustness are important when discussing time and the urban environment (Carmona 2003 et. al). Resiliency is the ability to resist change without deformation. Robustness is the ability to accommodate change without any significant physical change. Robustness usually deals with significance that is derived from meanings and symbols personified by form.

Catalysts should be timeless; therefore they should be able to accommodate change while keeping their importance. The urban environment is dynamic, thus designers need to understand and respond to urban changes: economic, social, and cultural forces. The principle of time is very important in the life of any design. Urban catalysts should provide a mixture of uses and activities that will extend the life of a project into different times of the day as well as seasons. This will provide a richer environment for users, and will foster repeat users of the development.

For an urban catalyst to respond to its context there are a few key contextual principles that need to be applied. Morphologically, the understanding of block and street layout needs to be recognized and enhanced if needed to insure that the circulation framework is functioning properly. The overall perceptions of an area need to be noted to understand what perceptual changes need to be made. This is also helpful for understanding the social fabric of an area and what changes the urban catalyst can foster to promote a positive social fabric. Urban catalysts should provide and enticing visual experience to the area in which they are developed, by using local architecture vernacular in a way that responds to change. Urban catalysts should enhance the functionality of an area, not hinder it. Catalyst should also respond to the “times” of a place, as a place changes the catalyst should be able to adapt to that change.
Sense of Place & Authenticity:

For urban catalysts to be successful they need to have a strong sense of place. “Place” is a commonly used word in the English language. The word comes with many connotations—physical, psychological, or social. The word's various meanings convey a richness that expresses the role that “place” plays in our daily lives. We often associate place with home, but place takes on a deeper meaning than that. Places have the power to become symbols of ideals, imageability, and hope. Think of landscapes like the Gateway Arch in St. Louis, the Inner Harbor in Baltimore, or the Vietnam Memorial in D.C. What do these landscapes mean to us? When you are in one of these spaces you know you are in a special place. That is the importance of place in design. Fritz Steele (1981) identifies two aspects of “place”. The first is sense, which is the experience in a particular setting. The second is spirit, which is the combination of attributes that give a place personality. Sense of place is an interaction between people and settings that creates reactions such as feelings, perceptions, and behaviors.

Setting is a critical piece in the theoretical chain that describes sense of place. Simply put a setting is the environment that surrounds a person at a location and time. A setting is made up of social and physical features. Physical features have a direct effect on activities as well as feelings in a place. For example, consider the difference between the way a person may feel while on a farm versus feelings experienced on an urban street. These two settings are made of different attributes that carry distinct meanings. Social features of a setting are a mixture of forces that work on an individual as a result of interactions with others. The social context has an immense impact on place. Steele (1981) later mentions that “the social context helps to determine the impact of the physical setting” and vice versa. This solidifies the interrelationship between physical and social features of place. How a person responds to this relationship is also affected by our perceptions. Perception is a two-stage process in which a person receives signals from a setting (place) and then organizes those signals to give them meaning. The meaning that is applied is often derived from personal or cultural views of the world.

Within settings, there are some physical features possessing strong qualities that stimulate one’s sense of place. Steele identifies these as location, boundaries, scale, and imagery. A place with a strong location has a sound spatial relationship to its surroundings. Boundaries, a clear delineation of a place from its surroundings, are important in creating sense of place. Boundaries can be of varying scales from small—the arrangement of furniture in a pocket park — or larger, such as cities like New Orleans where the sense of place is clearly defined by district boundaries.
The size of the environment in which a place sits plays a key role in the spirit of place. Steele (1981) states that elements that are big, small, or a mixture of the two can make this impact. Imagery within a setting is equally important to spirit of place. If a setting does not have components that invoke images in one’s mind it will be hard to realize what that place is about. In other words, a city that is rich in imagery will possess a strong sense of place and is more memorable.

The design of an urban space can enhance or weaken sense of place. Steele (1981 p. 94) believes designers should provide choices to people within a setting. Settings that allow user-flexibility convey a spirit of place that is specific to each user, much like a plaza with movable elements with which people can interact. Providing sequences in settings that build on each other tends to provide a more high-quality experience. The way a person enters and exits a space plays a key role in the experience of it; a badly designed entry/exit sequence will weaken the actual place experience. Places that have cues that trigger past experiences often present a high quality setting, much like a place that is consistent with its theme, symbolism, and form. User activities also affect the quality of a setting by amplifying the vitality of the area and drawing more people to it.

For the themes to be implemented successfully designers must understand the methods of making spaces (Steele 1981). The first is creating new settings where designs must meet human needs and be flexible enough to change as the dynamics of place change. New settings also need to incorporate new and old buildings to further strengthen sense of place. The use of locally owned businesses and names that are related to a place is another way to enhance the spirit of a place. Designers have the opportunity to improve existing settings as well as to create new ones. In the last few years there has been a resurgence of adaptive reuse in development projects. Renovation can produce a heightened sense of place if the designs can pick up on the important sense factors of the old setting rather than wiping the slate clean and starting over.

Authenticity in design is a topic in design-related discussion today. Authenticity is a concern in catalytic developments, because new developments need to fit into their context. There is a large amount of literature available about the topic. The definition of the terms “authentic” and “inauthentic” often vary from critic to critic. Critics argue that some urban developments that draw from historical references lack authenticity. Boyer (1992) argues that retro urban designs are for the inattentive viewer. Likewise, Ellin (1999) writes, “although preserving the past, both preservationists and gentrifiers could be more accurately described as rewriting or inventing the past...” (p.83). This raises the question of the “real” and the “simulation”.

Baudrillard (1983) describes three levels of simulation that can be applied in design. The first level is when simulations are blatant copies of reality. The second level is when simulations blur the boundary between reality and representation. In these two levels of simulation the real world still exists, and the simulation is distinguished from it. The final level of
simulation occurs when imitations of things that never really existed are presented. This level generates a realm of “hyper-reality” because it does not have a real origin. An example of a third level simulation would be Disneyland. Even though Disneyland’s Main Street is meant to bring to mind a main street anywhere in the United States, it is actually from nowhere.

On the contrary Ellin (2000) argues that even though themed places are criticized for being artificial, these spaces might embody the qualities people actually enjoy. Ellin gives ground to this argument by stating, “…themed environments might also be applauded for the diversion they offer, for simply providing places in which people can relax and have fun in the company of family and friends” (103). This raises the question of why urban design should not accommodate people’s desires, and design spaces they enjoy? Ultimately, people enliven spaces that they enjoy and charge them with value and meaning. For designs to be successful, people need to actively use them. Designers need to utilize their observation skills, and design according to context and use.

Overall, the issue of design authenticity is critical to the discussion of urban catalyst and I have developed my own criteria for authenticity in urban design. I will use the concepts of “rooted” and “non-rooted” to identifying the type of authenticity a design or design elements have. “Rooted” design means the project is ingrained or has some connection with the area in which it is located. This can be accomplished by either using local vernacular or a combination of building and landscape types. “Non-rooted” means the design or elements of the design are not particularly rooted in the area, but may be placed there due to economic or social reasons. Even though they are not originally rooted in place, “non-rooted” elements have the power to become ingrained. Overtime the users of the space, who impact meaning and sense of place through their presence, supply this characteristic. A good example of this is large chain restaurants, like the Hard Rock Cafe, that are placed in districts that already possess a strong character. These establishments survive because of the dollars that people, either locals or tourists, spend there. This makes the place a strong economic draw to the area even though it may not add to the inherit qualities of its context. We as designers see how badly these establishments unravel the fabric of a place, and need to be able to plan for more “rooted” developments to be created instead.

Urban catalysts need to successfully convey a strong sense of place and authenticity. For this to happen a catalyst needs to be rooted in its environment, and respond to its context. The setting in which a catalyst inhabits is critical, because it describes place. Therefore the catalyst must not ruin the setting; it must amplify it. Catalysts need to respond not only to the physical features, but also to the social features. This interrelationship plays a vital role in the “sense” of a place. Urban catalysts need to respond to the influences that surround them, so that their meaning and function is derived from place, providing an authenticity that comes from a real place.
Market Factors:

Most of us live in a market driven economy, most urban design actions occur within the forces of supply and demand. The notion of gaining a return that covers production cost is closely related to budget limits. Furthermore, in a market economy, decisions that have public consequence are often times made in the private sector. Carmona states, “this decision-making context is mediated by policy and regulatory frameworks to produce better outcomes” (et.al 203). Thus urban design actions usually occur in market economies that are regulated to some extent.

To effectively operate designers need to understand the financial and economic processes by which developments come into existence. Market economies are fueled by the pursuit of profit and are often characterized by regimes of capital gain. The development and redevelopment of the built fabric, is a means of making profits, and urban design is a key component of such strategies (Harvey, 1989).

There are two misconceptions about the processes that drive development: that design professionals are the main people shaping the urban environment; and that developers make the critical decisions, while designers simply provide packaging for those decisions (Carmona et.al. 2003). The first overstates the role of designers. It also opens designers up for criticism for areas of development that are out their control. The second understates designers’ role in shaping the urban environment, which we live.

Economic and market power lies in the hands of the groups with the resources and power to initiated development. Development has to be economically viable before it is undertaken. Furthermore, the risk and rewards that are attached to a development reflect both the complexity of the process and the broader economic context.

A project is vulnerable to external and internal risk at all stages. In the private sector, viability is measured in terms of the balance between risk and reward. A major barrier for urban developments is that they may not pay off, at least on the time scale that is set by investors. In the public sector, viability is normally considered in terms of broader objective of achieving and maintaining a healthy economy, and value for public money.

For an urban catalyst to be successful economically there needs to be a strong partnership between the public and private business sectors. This partnership will allow strategic planning of elements that will draw the most economic gain, allowing the development to be shaped by both the public and private sectors. The local economy, fueled by local business, should be considered in the make up of catalytic developments. It is important that catalysts economically stimulate the areas in which they are developed.
CONCLUSIONS

The literature review provides the theoretical framework that supports the research and design process methodology used in this study.

The lack of connectivity between urban developments and their contexts is a major problem in contemporary development. This disconnect results in projects that not only do not fit the spatial structure of their contexts, but also are not functionally, socially, and economically feasible. This lack of connection translates into a deficiency of authenticity in redevelopment projects. This issue is relevant because many cities are now focusing on downtown revitalization efforts. With a design framework focused on urban catalysts, landscape architects, architects, and urban designers will be able to apply catalytic principles to the existing unique resources of the city to direct urban rejuvenation.

Urban catalysts provide a spark that revives downtown. The urban catalyst approach relies on comprehensive urban analysis to address morphological,
perceptual, social, visual, functional, and temporal factors. Urban catalysts should generate activity, act as anchors, and respond to spatial conditions that can promote positive development. Catalysts should be able to respond and be influenced by the qualities that can help them generate a strong sense of place.

Cities have unique attributes, such as cultural landmarks or districts that can serve as existing resources for urban revitalization. These urban resources can serve as conceptual and structural models for future development scenarios in the city. For example, a city like New Orleans that has a strong music presence, could use music as a catalytic concept to redevelop a street that would celebrate the city's rich musical heritage. Music could be used, as a conceptual idea that could be translated into a built fabric would educate users on the various influences music has had on the city. This is not a clean slate approach such as urban renewal that actually robbed many cities of their vitality, but rather an approach where the design works within the context of the city. The result, urban regeneration, would amplify flavor and coherence in the urban fabric. As described by Wayne Attoe, “an appropriate urbanism for America must grow out of characteristics and conditions of American cities...” (1989, p. ix).
One way to achieve this is to follow a design process (figure 3.1) in which designers conduct a contextual city analysis to study morphological, perceptual, social, visual, functional, and temporal factors of the urban context. The next step is to include the residents of the redeveloped area, to discuss and record what the residents feel are the unique attributes of their place. From this study, designers should be able to describe unique characteristics of the city that can be expressed in catalytic design proposals. For example “entertainment catalyst”, would be supported by a set of urban spaces for that city that fit the criteria for entertainment catalysts. These criteria are derived from the general characteristics.

It is important that urban catalytic projects be considered as a revitalization strategy for urban redevelopment. It is essential that urban catalyst projects include the investment of local stakeholders from the beginning to help finance the project. Urban designers are capable of designing a project that not only reflects the site’s character, but also the city’s as well. This insures the city a place that cannot be found in another city, amplifying the local attributes as a draw for users.

Downtown redevelopment presents complex issues that many of our cities are confronting in order to rejuvenate their centers. The future state of our downtowns lies in the hands of landscape architects, architects, and planners. It is imperative that designers understand and respect the context and local attributes of our cities, for this is what makes each city profoundly different. By following this design framework, cities can intelligently redevelop areas in need of revitalization. The redeveloped areas will be true to place and will respond to changes because the attributes and influences that are identified by the comprehensive analysis are authentic to place. The key here is the effective translation of those attributes into the design scenario. Although the influences may be similar, it is the configuration of the influences that make the design projects unique to place. I call this configuration the catalytic web; it is the network of influences that play key roles in the generation of development and the amplification of sense of place.

For redevelopment projects to fit into an existing context, the existing sense and spirit of a place needs to be understood. Redevelopment projects should enhance rather than dull the sense of place. Projects that are developed to serve catalytic functions need to generate development and economic activity in the surrounding areas while respecting their context and being authentic to “place”. If conceived and developed according to what a city needs these projects can have profound affects on downtown revitalization efforts.
Design Project: The intent of this project is to serve as a prototype for demonstrating and testing the position and design process framework developed from Chapter Three. To accomplish this task, two sites were selected in Memphis, Tennessee’s largest city.

Why Memphis?

The history of Downtown Memphis is full of character, derived from its role in the birth of blues music, the cotton industry, and the Civil Rights Movement. In its heyday, Downtown Memphis was a center of shipping and commerce. As the largest port on the Mississippi River between St. Louis and New Orleans, Memphis matured as a transportation center and a market for cotton grown in the region. In the second half of the 19th century, Memphis was a booming and prosperous city that had capitalized on its river access, but by the late 20th century, the historic center city had fallen on hard times.

In the 1970s, the wheels of progress began to turn in Downtown Memphis, leading to the formation of the Center City Commission and one of the most dramatic revitalization efforts in the country. Today, Downtown is a bustling residential, business, and entertainment center that is truly the heart and soul of the city.

Memphis is currently experiencing a period of rapid redevelopment in some areas, however other areas are being overlooked. The overlooked areas possess untapped characteristics that can bring the city of Memphis to the forefront in urban redevelopment.
Currently most of the redevelopment has been focused on larger entertainment based venues, such as the AutoZone Park and the FedEx Forum. Although the city needs these venues for economic and entertainment purposes, there are still unrecognized social and spatial potentials in the city fabric.

For this reason I have chosen two different project types to demonstrate how the proposed design framework can identify attributes that can provide a structure to foster connections and feed areas in need of revitalization. The first project type shows how Court Square, an existing park can become a binding element that also promotes social and spatial equity within the commercial core and an adjacent city neighborhood. The second project shows how the Southside neighborhood, a forgotten neighborhood can fit within the changing structure of the city. This neighborhood is built from the old fabric and is seen in new ways, incorporating both change and meaning into the evolving fabric of the city.
The name Memphis, with its ancient meaning of “beauty and establishment”, seems ironic when looking at the city’s infant years. From 1819 until about 1840, Memphis was a primitive mud hole striving to survive as a town. It took a little over two decades for Memphis to become established. Three-land speculators—James Winchester, Andrew Jackson, and John Overton founded the city of Memphis. Winchester gave the city the name “Memphis” in the hope that the name would convey the development and prestige that is associated with the Egyptian capital that rests on the Nile River. Though credited with founding Memphis, none of the three founders ever stayed in the city. They were more interested in increasing their property value by developing a town on the property. Memphis was originally planned in a square (grid) geometry, which was very similar to towns on the East Coast during that time. The surveyors laid out a small-town of 362 lots four to five blocks in depth along the river. There were four squares or parks in the city, and they were named for their functions: Auction, Court, Exchange, and Market. The expansion of Memphis into an urban trade center depended mainly on the development of its surrounding area, which blossomed as the growth of Memphis raced at a rapid pace.

Two developments that transformed the city’s fortune were the navy yard and the completion of the Memphis/Charleston railroad. The navy yard solidified Memphis’ prominence as a port city, and the railroad provided a valuable connection to the Atlantic Coast. Flatboats loaded with cotton and other goods lined the river docks as fur traders, peddlers, and gamblers occupied hotels and saloons. Front Street was a busy trading center for cotton, which was “King” in Memphis and was also known as “white gold.”

In the mid 1850’s, Memphis had grown to the sixth largest city in the nation, fueled by high river traffic and the cotton industry. The 1860’s saw the nation at war with itself. The Civil War launched some social changes that would later shape the city for decades to come. Upon the establishment of a freedman’s camp by Union authorities, the population of Memphis grew once again. In 1870 yellow fever, also known as “yellow jack”, killed a large portion of the population. The city of Memphis lost so many people that its charter as a city was lost. It took about fourteen years for the city to recover. The main reason for the Memphis’ recovery rested in the revival of river trade. Well after the Civil War had ended African-Americans continued to move to Memphis. Beale Street and the surrounding district became an economically booming and vibrant black community. The South’s first African-American millionaire, Robert Church, lived on Beale Street. Church, a former slave himself, financed a park and auditorium for the black community. His financial support helped the city regain its charter in 1893.

Beale Street became the home to a new style of music. It was from the raucous, free-spirited environment of Beale Street that W.C. Handy would give birth to the Blues. Beale Street kept its vibrancy through World War II as Memphis’ popularity grew. As the majority of Memphis’ white residents moved to the suburbs, reform-minded city-leaders began a major clean up of Beale Street, closing most of the saloons and pool halls. As a result of
this action, the music scene in Memphis suffered temporarily. By 1970 downtown Memphis had faded due to neglect of its buildings and the closing of Peabody and Beale Streets.

In 1976 the city began to rebuild the central part of the city by launching a public initiative to improve the quality of the downtown. The construction of Mid-America Mall, a pedestrian corridor along Main Street, began this improvement. The mall was intended as a pedestrian destination, but it has been as much a success for its role as a safe corridor that links the downtown’s points of interest. This role was enhanced further when the city and the Memphis Area Transit Authority (MATA) invested in a trolley system and associated public infrastructure along what is now the Main Street Mall. In response to the need to balance public and private investments, the City of Memphis and Shelby County chartered one of the first downtown redevelopment agencies and business improvement districts in the nation. The Memphis Center City Commission (CCC) was formed in 1977 to direct the comprehensive redevelopment of Downtown Memphis and to serve as a partnership between private business and government in the revitalization effort.

Another step in the revitalization of downtown Memphis came with the rebirth of Beale Street that occurred in the late 1970’s. The city purchased nearly all of the properties along three blocks of Beale Street. The Beale Street Management Corporation was formed to create an entertainment district. In 1983, the first club reopened on Beale and other clubs and businesses followed. These businesses moved into renovated spaces, producing the most vibrant streetscape and activity center in downtown Memphis and the Mid-South. Over the last twenty years, the street has gone from the epitome of urban decay to the number one tourist attraction in the state of Tennessee.

In 1991, the $60 million Pyramid Arena opened at the north end of downtown, providing a home for the University of Memphis basketball team and a venue for concerts. The same year, the Lorraine Motel, the site of the assassination of Civil Rights leader Martin Luther King Jr., reopened as the National Civil Rights Museum. The museum has introduced plans to expand its facilities to incorporate exhibit space and to develop a public plaza that will strengthen the museum’s connection to Main Street.

Residential growth downtown has also made major advances. In 1977, only 244 market-rate housing units existed in the downtown area. A desire to live on the river drove a tremendous demand for these limited housing units. These early developments were in such high demand that major developers took notice. They began successful residential development, new construction, renovation, and reuse projects. Today more than 22,000 people live in the Central Business Improvement District, with 5,000 of those in the traditional downtown core.

However, while much of the downtown has seen economic revitalization and physical rejuvenation, some areas are still in need of revitalization. One such area is located between the new redevelopment, downtown core, and Midtown. The second area is the Southside neighborhood, a
neighborhood that is in disrepair due to changes in the physical and social fabric.

These two sites were selected as the focus of the design portion of this study to demonstrate how an urban catalyst can differ depending on revitalization needs. Each site plays a critical role in the physical, social, and economic structure of Memphis.

Court Square plays a critical role in Memphis’ public space structure, because of its spatial clarity and permanence. Court Square has demonstrated its ability to adapt to city dynamics, standing the test of time and all the while attracting users. Although their uses have changed, the buildings around Court have remained in place, allowing it to retain its spatial prominence as a “square”. The square also occupies a strategic position with potential to link the new revitalizing riverfront district with the Main Street Mall and Entertainment District. Hence Court Square will be the element of permanence that will inform redevelopment.

The Southside Neighborhood is a critical part of Memphis’ historical past, because of its role in the Civil Rights Movement. Southside has undergone various changes most notably the removal of housing and street reconfiguration during urban renewal. These changes led to the decline of the neighborhood, because the fine-grained streets that were once the life of the neighborhood were replaced with super blocks. Southside occupies a strategic position within the city, with potential to not only link downtown and South Memphis together, but also become a catalyst for other neighborhood revitalization projects in the city of Memphis. The neighborhood is strongly rooted with influences from Beale Street and blues music, the Civil Rights Movement, and the Mississippi delta. Hence the historical character and influences will be the elements that will inform redevelopment for this neighborhood.

![Figure 4.9 Location of project sites within the city.](image)
The following chapter illustrates the results of an urban inventory and analysis conducted for Downtown Memphis, Tennessee. The inventory and analysis helped identify the sites that where chosen for the design portion of this thesis. Brief descriptions and synthesis based on the analysis are also given.
The Memphis Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) is a five-county area ranked as the nation’s 43rd largest in 1999. Memphis is the fastest growing part of the region, gaining population at a rate of 8.5%. This growth rate is the 140th fastest among the 257 MSAs in the country.

From most anywhere in the metro Memphis area, Downtown is less than a 30 minute car ride.

**Shelby County:**
Population: 660,960  
Land Area: 775 sq. miles  
County Seat: City of Memphis
Getting into and around Downtown Memphis is simple, thanks to the Memphis Area Transit Authority’s (MATA) downtown trolleys and bus system, daily train service, efficient airport transit, and more than 40,000 parking spaces.

Trolley System

The Main Street & Riverfront Trolley Line can take you just about anywhere in Downtown. Over 1 million riders each year use trolleys, which make a five-mile loop along Main Street and the Mississippi River. There are plans for a $56 million trolley line expansion along Madison Avenue that will connect the Downtown Core to the Medical District. The Memphis Area Transit Authority (MATA) operates two bus transfer and park & ride facilities in Downtown Memphis, located at the northern and southern ends of Main Street.

Both project sites are well served by transportation types. The trolley plays a key role in the downtown transportation and links both project areas together.
1. **Pyramid Arena**: Built as a salute to Memphis’ namesake Memphis, Egypt, visitors are greeted by a statue of the Egyptian pharaoh Rameses II before entering the 22,500-seat, multi-purpose arena, which opened in 1991. The 32-story stainless steel tribute to Egyptian heritage soars even taller than the Statue of Liberty.

2. **Memphis Cook Convention Center**: The Memphis Cook Convention Center, which is currently undergoing a $70 million expansion project, has 125,000 square feet of exhibition space. The expansion will add approximately 35,000 square feet of exhibit space, a 30,000 square foot ballroom, and a 2,000-seat performing arts center.

3. **Magevney House**: Built in the 1830s, this diminutive clapboard house is one of the oldest dwellings in Memphis and is furnished with period antiques.

4. **Court Square**: Beautiful park in the heart of downtown, with a fountain and gazebo. It is the last of the original city squares that remain today.

5. **Cotton Exchange Building**: There are cotton samples/memorabilia dating to the 1800s on display in this building.

6. **Peabody Hotel**: This is the South’s most illustrious hotel. Its historic lobby is also home of the world famous Peabody Ducks.

7. **Sun Studio**: Opened by Sam Phillips in 1950, Sun Studio is the birthplace of rock-and-roll, launching the careers of Elvis Presley, Jerry Lee Lewis, B.B. King, Rufus Thomas, Howlin’ Wolf, Johnny Cash, Carl Perkins, Roy Orbison. Sun Studio also has a museum featuring hundreds of rare recordings, memorabilia, photographs, and vintage recording equipment.

8. **FedEx Forum**: This new arena is located just a half block south of Beale Street and is one of the flagships of the sports and entertainment district. FedEx Forum is scheduled to open in Fall 04."
9. A. Schwab’s Dry Goods Store: This historic store has been operating on Beale Street since 1876.

10. Gibson Guitar Factory: Located just off of Beale Street this museum/factory demonstrates the guitar-making process.

11. Orpheum Theatre: Built in 1928, this former vaudeville palace has been beautifully restored and transformed into a performing arts center. Events range from Broadway shows, operas, ballets, concerts, and films.

12. South Main Historic Arts District: A tremendous arts district with numerous art galleries and studios and antique and furniture shops.

13. National Civil Rights Museum: The world’s first museum dedicated to the lessons of the American Civil Rights Movement in exhibit form is housed at the historic site of the Lorraine Motel, where Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. was assassinated. Exhibits and interactive displays trace the history of civil rights activity and leaders.

14. Arcade Restaurant: The city’s oldest restaurant (opened in 1919), the Arcade has been featured in several Hollywood films.

15. Central Station: Opened in 1914 and renovated in 1999, Central Station is the transportation center for Amtrak train travel and the Memphis Area Transit Authority’s buses and trolleys. It is also home to a police precinct, commercial and retail areas, and apartments.

16. Tennessee Brewery: Located in the Cotton Warehouse district, this brewery provides visitors with local beer varieties.
Contextual Features

1. Pyramid Arena
2. St. Jude Children Research Hospital
3. Civic Center
4. AutoZone Ballpark
5. Sun Studio
6. Peabody Place
7. Beale Street
8. FedEx Forum
9. Gibson Guitar Factory
10. Orpheum Theater
11. Tom Lee Park/Riverfront Development
12. National Civil Rights Museum
13. Tennessee Brewery
14. Central Station

Figure 5.8 Contextual Features. Image courtesy of the Center City Commission.
Within each sub-district, there are lots of amenities, parks, community-oriented organizations, and other features that make neighborhoods feel like home.

**Downtown Core:** As the largest neighborhood in Downtown, the Core stretches from the Mississippi River to Danny Thomas Boulevard, and from Linden Avenue to Auction Avenue. It encompasses the Historic Districts of Cotton Row, Gayoso-Peabody, Madison-Monroe, Court Square, and Pinch/Main Street, as well as the AutoZone Park subdistrict.

**Cotton Row Historic District Area:** When Memphis was a center for cotton production and distribution in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, the Cotton Row Historic District was an activity center for the unloading of riverboats and for many cotton warehouses. Today, the Shrine Building, Cotton Growers, Front Row Apartments, 49 Union, Cotton Row Apartments, the Timpani Building, Union Commons Condominiums, and River Row Condominiums offer a variety of housing alternatives within this area.

**Court Square Historic District Area:** The Court Square Historic District Area is anchored by Court Square Park and is characterized by many different uses. The Porter Building is a residential condominium property that is immediately adjacent to Court Square Park. Other commercial buildings around the park also provide residential opportunities on their upper floors. The Claridge House and 99 Tower Place are other high-rise residential buildings in the vicinity of Court Square Park.

**South Side (CBID):** South of Linden Avenue and west of Danny Thomas, this community encompasses the South Main Historic District, South Bluffs neighborhood, Warehouse District, Founder’s Pointe, and Foote Homes. In addition, 80 units of affordable housing exist in the district’s northeast corner in an area called Pontotoc Row. This area is anchored by two National Register of Historic Districts and boasts the National Civil Rights Museum, eclectic art galleries and studios, and is emerging as the city’s hottest place to shop.

**Medical District:** At 700 acres, the Medical District is the largest sub-district outside the Downtown Core, and more than 30,000 people work in the Medical District, while more than 7,800 students attend the neighborhood’s educational anchors. As a result, a number of apartment buildings and complexes are interspersed among commercial businesses and medical facilities.
Court Square is located in the heart of Downtown Memphis between the Riverfront, Civic, and Sports & Entertainment Districts. Although the uses in the districts that surround the square have changed, Court Square continues to play a vital role in Memphis’ public space system.

1. Riverfront- Court Square and the Mississippi River have long had a close relationship. In the City of Memphis’ 185-year history these two elements have been present. This relationship alone is a critical piece in understanding the structure the river and the Square give the city.

2. Front Street- Front Street was Memphis’ “Riverside Drive” before the current road bearing that name was constructed in the late 1940’s.

Front Street, due to its one-sided street wall provided key views not only of the Mississippi River and the public promenade, but also towards Court Square. Now this street has a different character and a double-sided street wall.

3. Confederate Park- Designed as a memorial to the Civil War, Confederate Park is on the National Register of Historic Places. Confederate Park was the only park on the river until the opening of Tom Lee and Jefferson Davis Parks. The park provides great views from the famous River Bluffs.

4. Sports & Entertainment District- This district provides a number of user opportunities with the Peabody Hotel, Peabody Place, AutoZone Park, and Historic Beale Street. The district will gain a new element the FedEx Forum, which will open fall 2004.

5. Civic Center- Memphis’s civic hub is located just two blocks North of Court Square. The linkage between these two elements is as old as the elements themselves. The square itself symbolized civic pride and opportunity.

6. Main Street- Main Street is pedestrian priority corridor that stretches between the Civic Center and the Historic Arts District. The street is lined with buildings that accommodate a mixture of uses. A trolley brings back the character of the street from the 1920’s.
The city of Memphis was laid out in a grid, with four public squares: Auction, Market, Exchange, and Court-- names which clearly depicted their uses. The founders of the city also called for a public promenade to stretch from the squares down to the Mississippi River. As the city grew the public promenade gave way to Front Street, Riverside Drive, and a working waterfront that was supported by the cotton industry. As time passed the squares were built over and today Court is the only remaining vestige of the original four square structure.

Figure 6.2 Memphis Waterfront and Court Square. Image courtesy of the Center City Commission
Visual Character—Historic Photographs

Figure 6.4 Court Square circa 1906.

Figure 6.3 View of Main Street trolley.

Figure 6.5 View of Memphis skyline circa 1910.

Figure 6.6 Historic map of Memphis.

Figure 6.7 View of Memphis riverfront and flat boats.

Figure 6.8 View of Memphis’ cobblestone landing and cotton bales.
The Court Square area retains the grid block structure that on which the city of Memphis was laid out. The blocks are highly permeable with alleys cutting through. Buildings vary in scale but are close enough to form a solid street wall. Court Square itself functions as a contrasting void in the grid. To the east the fabric loses its continuity and coherence. This area does not have a uniform street wall. There is a distinct difference between the old city grid and the “loose” grid to the East.
There are three distinctive street types: those that terminate at the river’s edge, those that are one-way, and pedestrian priority streets. The streets that terminate at the river are Adams, Jefferson, Court, Monroe, and Union. These streets provide outstanding views of the Mississippi River, which contribute to a sense of way-finding.

Second Street is a one-way corridor that runs from North to South. Main Street is a pedestrian/trolley corridor that provides alternative opportunities to experience downtown on foot. Riverside Drive connects Interstate 55 to Interstate 40 and provides challenges for pedestrians wishing to get down to the river.

The street types located in this area really provide a sense of way-finding. Main Street provides a strong connection between the north and south business districts.
Morphology: Block Structure

Figure 6.11 Block structure Court Square

- Jefferson Davis Park
- Confederate Park
- Court Square

Figure 6.12 View looking Southwest over Court Square.

Figure 6.13 View looking Northeast over Court Square.

Figure 6.14 View looking west over Court Street from Court Avenue.

Figure 6.15 View looking over Confederate Park towards Court Square.

Figure 6.16 View looking Southwest towards Court Square.

- Buildings above 5 stories high
- Buildings below 5 stories high
Visual Character: Court Square

The area is very well maintained. There is a blend of defined open space and spatial corridors that open out into views of pleasant elements. Court Square and some of the historic buildings play a key role in the visual fabric of this area.
Figure 6.25 View looking east along Court Ave.

Figure 6.26 View looking into Court Square

Figure 6.27 View looking south along Second Street

Figure 6.28 View of Burch, Porter, and Johnson office building on the Northeastern edge of Court Square.

Figure 6.29 Court Square visual character locator map.
Figure 6.30 Walking radius Court Square.
Court Square has been an element of permanence throughout periods of growth and devolution in downtown Memphis. It has the potential to link the newly revitalizing riverfront to downtown and midtown Memphis.

- Large amounts of under utilized land.
- Nothing to attract people from Court Avenue down to the river.
- Court Avenue and Front Street both have a poor image and most of their blocks are dominated by parking garages and vehicular entrances.
- Riverside Drive has no pedestrian activity and is difficult to cross.
- Lack of critical mass of pedestrians to support the use of Confederate Park.
- Very limited sidewalk width on the East-West streets.
- Second Street provides a unique opportunity for redevelopment and connection.
- Streets in this area need streetscape enhancements to provide aesthetic qualities and opportunities for social interaction to occur.
- Provide a sense of way finding between the riverfront, Court Square, and midtown.
Design Development: Court Square
Chapter Seven
This diagram focuses on Court Square’s role as an element of permanence that provides spatial clarity for adjacent districts. As shown in Figure 7.1, Court Square has a strong relationship to four districts: Pinch/Civic, Riverfront, Midtown, and the Sports & Entertainment. Each district has unique qualities that come together at Court Square.

Figure 7.1 Concept diagram for Court Square.

The concept for this project can be described as Transformation: “old informs the new”. The project demonstrates how Court Square can provide a point of connection to promote social and economic activity. It is envisioned in three phases: The first initiative will consist of public space improvements to the Civic Center along the Main Street Corridor. The second phase of the project will consist of the Riverfront redevelopment project and enhancements in the Sports and Entertainment District. The last phase will consist of Court Street and Second Street improvements, as well as the development of a promenade.
Goals and Objectives

1. Connect downtown, Main Street, Court Square to the riverfront.
   - Provide view corridors to the Mississippi River
   - Utilize pedestrian bridges as portals to the riverfront
   - Provide a sense of way finding through streetscape enhancements

2. Amplify Court Street’s Character as a place of social and spatial equity.
   - Bring back the street wall to clearly show Court Street’s importance to connect downtown to Midtown.
   - Restructure the fragmented fabric and introduce mixed-use buildings to extend the life of downtown from the river east into the sports & entertainment district.
   - Enhance the overall streetscape character, including street trees, building facades, and paving types.

3. Create a promenade that overlooks the river and has a direct connection to Court Square and Downtown.
   - Provide an upper and lower promenade to capitalize on views of the river and create a new riverfront experience for all Memphians and visitors.
   - Rejuvenate the area by providing a mixture of uses along the promenade.
   - Bring back an element of “old” Memphis that responds to how the city functions today.
Conceptual Masterplan

Figure 7.3 Court Square Urban Connection Conceptual Masterplan.
Figure 7.4 View of Monroe Avenue as it terminates at Riverside Drive (left). Illustrative sketch of streetscape enhancements and upper promenade crossing over Monroe Avenue (bottom right).
Figure 7.5 View of the existing condition of Court Street as it terminates at the riverfront (right). Illustrative section that shows the upper promenade as it stretches from Confederate Park on the right to the Customs House on the left. Court Street has been reclaimed as a pedestrian corridor down to the riverfront (bottom).
Figure 7.6 Illustrative section that shows the upper and lower promenades and their relationship to the trolley rails and Riverside Drive.
Figure 7.7 Illustrative sketch of the upper promenade overlooking Riverside Drive and the Mississippi River.
Site Inventory & Analysis: Southside Neighborhood
Chapter Eight
The Southside Neighborhood is located in the South Central Business Improvement District.

1. **National Civil Rights Museum** - The National Civil Rights Museum was opened in 1991 at the site of the Lorraine Motel. The Museum exists to assist the public in understanding the Civil Rights Movement and its impact and influence on the human rights movement worldwide, through its collections, exhibitions, research and educational programs.

2. **Highway 61** - Highway 61 (Third Street) is the “blues road” that travels from the Mississippi delta north through the Southside Neighborhood.

3. **The Orpheum Theatre** - The “South’s Finest Theatre” one of Memphis’ most remarkable success stories. The theatre was able to overcome a variety of adversities that ranged from several untimely bankruptcies, a devastating fire, the decay of downtown Memphis and the threat of demolition for the construction of an office complex.

4. **Beale Street** - The Blues were born on Beale Street, and it was the home to famous blues musicians such as W.C. Handy who wrote the first blues song here in 1909. Beale Street is one of the most famous streets in Memphis, and it is the soul of old Memphis. Aside from the bustling cotton trade on the cobblestone banks of Front Street along the Mississippi, no other Memphis landmark has held such mystique, intrigue, fame and infamy over the years.

5. **Arts District** - This culturally rich neighborhood is anchored by the newly-renovated, historic Central Station and the beloved Arcade restaurant on the south end, the Orpheum Theatre on the north, and on the east and west by the National Civil Rights Museum, art galleries, hip restaurants, renovated warehouses-turned-lofts, open markets and trendy shops.

6. **Main Street** - Main Street is pedestrian priority corridor that stretches between the Civic Center and the Historic Arts District. The street is lined with buildings that accommodate a mixture of uses. A trolley brings back the character of the street from the 1920’s.
Morphology: Evolution of Site

The second site for application for the urban catalyst model is the Southside Neighborhood. Historically African-American, the neighborhood has been a blue-collar neighborhood since its beginning. Known as South Memphis before it was annexed by Memphis, the neighborhood was home to the flatboat workers who loaded and unloaded cotton along the Mississippi River waterfront. By the 1850’s, the lower blocks near the wharf began to develop into a commercial center for businesses catering not only to the free African-American population, but others as well. The multi-racial commercial center was born out of necessity, because the African-American population had nowhere to purchase goods and services in Memphis. Main Street and Union Avenue were off limits as places of commerce to African-Americans.

The Depression hit hard in the city of Memphis, especially in the black community. Without the presence of the Solvent Savings Bank, which African-Americans relied on, many black businesses went under. City officials encouraged people to move into formerly owned African-American owned businesses, a move that changed the character of the neighborhood. Pawnshops took over grocery stores, liquor stores replaced community-gathering places, and some buildings were simply boarded up. This pattern demonstrated a concern for profit over service. Urban renewal almost destroyed the Southside Neighborhood entirely; changing the way people used the neighborhood. First, the super-block was introduced into the street pattern, taking the life away from the street. Second the housing stock suffered because only a small amount of housing was rebuilt in the neighborhood. The housing that was rebuilt came in the form of housing projects.

Figure 8.2 View of Beale Street during urban renewal.
Figure 8.3 View of Beale Street looking west during urban renewal.
Figure 8.4 View of Beale Street looking east during urban renewal.
Figure 8.5 View of the Galina building during urban renewal.
**Figure Ground:** The block structure of this neighborhood transitions from a coarse grain from Riverside Drive to Second Street, to a more fragmented structure from Second Street to Danny Thomas Blvd. This area has such a distinct change in grain due to the Federal Urban Renewal Program, which demolished existing housing, consolidated blocks, and replaced the former low-rise buildings with housing projects, leaving a number of vacant parcels in the neighborhood.
Street Pattern: The pattern of streets in this area is the result of the juxtaposition of two grid systems, which produce a number of triangular intersections. There are four primary streets that have a North/South orientation: Front, Main, Second, Third, and Hernando. Main Street is extremely important in supporting the daily flow of people from the South CBD to the Central and North CBD. Third Street, also known as highway 61 “the blues highway”, is a corridor with tremendous historical significance. The streets with an east/west orientation have the potential to connect the adjacent areas together as well as provide a strong connection into Midtown.
Morphology: Block Structure-Southside Neighborhood

Figure 8.8 Block structure Southside Neighborhood

- Buildings above 5 stories high
- Buildings below 5 stories high
Figure 8.9 View looking south along Main Street.

Figure 8.10 View looking southeast along Main Street.

Figure 8.11 View looking east towards the Southside Neighborhood.

Figure 8.12 View looking east towards Room 306 where Martin Luther King was assassinated.

Figure 8.13 View of the National Civil Rights Museum (left) Southside Neighborhood visual character location map (right).
Visual Character: The visual character of this neighborhood is rather dichotomous, in that the east side of the neighborhood has been revitalized with new housing and commercial space. The north edge of the neighborhood is growing rapidly with the construction of the FedEx Forum and improvements along Beale Street and Ponotoc Ave. The rest of the neighborhood is in despair, in need of revitalization at all levels. Visually the area speaks of hardships, desertion, and hopelessness.
Walking Radius-Southside Neighborhood

Civil Rights Museum Site

Half Mile Radius

Quarter Mile Radius

Figure 8.20 Southside Neighborhood walking radius.
Well, I don’t know what will happen now. We’ve got some difficult days ahead.
But it doesn’t matter with me now. Because I’ve been to the mountaintop.
And I don’t mind. Like anybody, I would like to live a long life. Longevity has its place.
But I’m not concerned about that now. I just want to do God’s will.
And He’s allowed me to go up to the mountain.
And I’ve looked over.
And I’ve seen the promised land. I may not get there with you.
But I want you to know tonight, that we, as a people will get to the promised land.

--- Martin Luther King, Jr

Figure 8.21 I am a man (left) Rights marchers (top center) Cops arrest a marcher (bottom center) Dignity poster (right).
In 1968, in Memphis, Tennessee, the civil rights movement and the labor movement came together in a massive struggle for human and public employee rights. On February 11, 1968 over 1,300 sanitation workers, predominantly African American, went on strike demanding their rights to organize a union, to gain a living wage and to receive the respect and dignity due all working men and women. Wages and working conditions for Memphis sanitation workers were horrific, with the average pay wage being a $1.80 an hour. The wages were so low that forty percent of the workers qualified for welfare. They lifted leaky garbage tugs into decrepit trucks and were treated unfairly.

On a February afternoon, two black sanitation workers sat inside the back of a garbage truck to stay dry. Poorly maintained, an electrical short in the truck's wiring system caused the compressor to start running, crushing the workers to death. The Memphis Sanitation Department gave the families of each worker a months pay plus $500 for funeral expenses. To make the situation worse, there were no city officials in attendance at the funerals, nor was any other compensation granted. Later that evening the president of the American Federation of State County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME), T.O. Jones held a meeting to discuss the pay, safety conditions, and recent deaths of the sanitation workers. The workers ultimately decided to strike. The strike was declared illegal by then Mayor Loeb. The mayor delivered a back-to-work ultimatum and refused to negotiate. Concerned with growing racial tensions, a small group of black and white ministers urged the mayor to return to the negotiating table but were rejected.

The AFSCME submitted the union's demands which included, a pay increase, sick leave, and union recognition, still the mayor refused to listen. On February 23, strikers and their supporters arrived at City Hall to hear the city council vote on the sub-committee's resolution on union recognition. The council voted to support the mayor and then quickly adjourned.
Union organizers sought to protest nonviolently. The Memphis Police Department gave permission for the strikers to march from City Hall to Mason Temple Church. As they marched, police cruisers began to push into the crowd. The marchers began to shake the patrol cruiser and police consequently responded by spraying the demonstrators with mace. The march ended in violence.

The strike continued and Reverend James Lawson, with support from other union leaders, urged Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. to come to Memphis. Dr. King viewed the sanitation workers strike as “an ideal scenario to eliminating poverty”.

Dr. King returned on March 28th to lead a march in support of the sanitation workers on Beale Street in downtown Memphis. Minutes after the procession began, violence erupted. Dr. King was escorted away while police dispersed the marchers with tear gas and nightsticks. King and many others believed the march had been undermined and sabotaged.

That was the first time in King’s life he was forced to leave a civil rights march. Dr. King felt compelled to return to Memphis to organize another non-violent march to put doubts about non-violent protests to rest, and to lay the groundwork for a successful mass demonstration in Washington DC with the Poor People’s Campaign.

On March 28th, martial law had been declared and 4,000 soldiers of the Tennessee National Guard patrolled the streets. Fearlessly, the sanitation workers marched the following day, shadowed by soldiers. Dr. King returned to Memphis, this time intending on leading a march despite the injunction against the strike. On April 3 Dr. King spoke at the city’s Mason Temple and gave one of his most stirring speeches “I’ve Been to the Mountain Top”. This speech would ultimately be Dr. King’s last.

April 4, 1968 was a day that changed the nation. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. was staying at the Lorraine Motel in Memphis. King emerged from Room 306 and leaned over the balcony to greet supporters that gathered in the courtyard. By 6:03, King lay dying, the victim of a sniper’s bullet.
Something is happening in Memphis, something is happening in our world. Now we’re going to march again. And force everybody to see that there are thirteen hundred of God’s children here suffering, sometimes going hungry, going through dark and dreary nights wondering how this thing is going to come out. That’s the issue. And we’ve got to say to the nation: we know it’s coming out. For when people get caught up with that which is right and they are willing to sacrifice for it, there is no stopping point short of victory.

Well, I don’t know what will happen now. We’ve got some difficult days ahead. But it doesn’t matter with me now. Because I’ve been to the mountaintop. And I don’t mind. Like anybody, I would like to live a long life. Longevity has its place. But I’m not concerned about that now. I just want to do God’s will. And He’s allowed me to go up to the mountain. And I’ve looked over. And I’ve seen the promised land. I may not get there with you. But I want you to know tonight, that we, as a people, will get to the promised land. And I’m happy, tonight. I’m not worried about anything. I’m not fearing any man. Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord.
Monday, Jan 1 - Henry Loeb is sworn into office as mayor.
Sunday, Jan. 31 - Rain sends sewer workers home.
Tuesday, Feb. 1 - Two sanitation workers are killed in an accident on a city truck.
Monday, Feb. 12 - Memphis sanitation and public employees strike after last-minute attempts to resolve grievances fail. Newspapers claim 200 workers of 1,300 remain on the job but only 38 of 180 trucks move. Mayor Loeb says strike is illegal but says “this office stands ready... to talk to anyone about his legitimate questions at any time.”
Tuesday, Feb. 13 - An International Union official flies in from Washington to meet with the mayor. He calls for union recognition, dues checkoff and negotiations to resolve the workers’ grievances. The Mayor says he’ll hire new workers unless the strikers return to their jobs.
Wednesday, Feb. 14 - The Mayor delivers a back-to-work ultimatum for 7 a.m. Feb. 15. Police escort the few garbage trucks in operation. Negotiations between the city and the union break off. Newspapers say more than 10,000 tons of garbage is piled up.
Friday, Feb. 16 - Union leaders urge the city council to intervene. The council supports the Mayor. Memphis NAACP members endorse the strike.
Sunday, Feb. 18 - AFSCME International President Jerry Wurf arrives and says the strike can end only when the workers’ demands are met. The Ministerial Association arranges a meeting between the Mayor and union leaders moderated by a Memphis rabbi. It goes until 5 a.m.
Monday, Feb. 19 - NAACP and others stage all-night vigil and picketing at city hall.
Tuesday, Feb.20 - The union and the NAACP calls for a citywide boycott of downtown merchants.
Thursday, Feb. 22 - City Council sub-committee headed by Councilman Fred Davis urges that the city recognize the union, in rowdy meeting with council chambers packed by more than 1,000 strikers and supporters. Meeting adjourns without action.
Friday, Feb. 23 - The Council refuses to recognize the union. Police attack strikers during a march on Main Street, using mace.
Saturday, Feb. 24 - Black leaders and ministers form citywide organization to support the strike and the boycott. City obtains court injunction to keep union from staging demonstrations or picketing.
Sunday, Feb. 25 - Ministers call on their congregations to boycott and march.
Monday, Feb. 26 - Daily marches begin, amid rumors that a compromise has been received by the Mayor.
Tuesday, Feb. 27 - The Mayor backs down on the compromise. Hundreds demonstrate at city hall. Courts cite 23 union members for contempt of court.
Thursday, Feb. 29 - Mayor Loeb sends each striker a letter inviting him back to work without union recognition. Two strike leaders arrested for jaywalking. Union files suit in federal court.
Friday, March 1 - Mayor meets with black ministers. Windows at his home are broken and he blames the strikers. Federal judge rejects union’s suit.
Sunday, March 3 - Eight-hour gospel singing marathon at Mason Temple raises money for strikers and shows community support.
Monday, March 4 - State Sen. Frank White proposes bill to create state mediation board to resolve impasse. Mayor opposes it.
Tuesday, March 5 - Ministers announce the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. will come to Memphis, as 116 strikers and supporters are arrested for sitting in at city hall.
Wednesday, March 6 - Seven union leaders given 10- day sentences and fines for contempt of court. Strikers stage a mock funeral at city hall, lamenting the death of freedom in Memphis.
Thursday, March 7 - City Council votes against dues checkoff proposal.
Friday, March 8 - Trash fires in South Memphis are blamed on strike supporters.
Saturday, March 9 - At Mayor’s suggestion, National Guard begins holding riot drills.

Monday, March 11 - Students skip high school to participate in march, led by black ministers. Two students arrested.

Wednesday, March 13 - Nine demonstrators arrested at Main and McCall. Police claim they threatened shoppers.

Thursday, March 14 - National NAACP leader Roy Wilkins addresses meeting of 10,000 or more and expresses support for a firm, peaceful protest. Six pickets are arrested and charged with blocking the Democrat Road sanitation depot entrance.

Saturday, March 16 - Mayor says entire city should vote on dues checkoff questions in August. Union says no.

Monday, March 18 - Newspapers claim strike is failing as scabs operate 90 garbage trucks. But 17,000 Memphians attend rally where Dr. King calls for a citywide march on March 22.

Wednesday, March 20 - Mayor restates his opposition to union demands.

Friday, March 22 - Record snowstorm blocks Dr. King’s return. March is cancelled. City and union agree to mediation. Round-the-clock meetings begin.

Wednesday, March 27 - SCLC Leader Ralph David Abernathy addresses rally in support of strikers. Mediation talks collapse.

Thursday, March 28 - March from Clayborn Temple, led by Dr. King, is interrupted by window breaking. Police move into crowds with nightsticks, mace, tear gas and gunfire. A 16-year old boy, Larry Payne, is shot to death. Police arrest 280, report about 60 injured, mostly blacks. State legislature authorizes 7 p.m. curfew and 4,000 National Guardsmen move in.

Friday, March 29 - Some 300 sanitation workers and ministers, march peacefully and silently from Clayborn Temple to City Hall — escorted by five armored personnel carriers, five jeeps, three hugh military trucks and dozens of Guardsmen with bayonets fixed. President Johnson and AFL-CIO President George Meany offer assistance in resolving the dispute. Mayor Loeb turns them down.

Sunday, March 31 - Ministers urge restraint. Dr. King cancels trip to Africa and plans return to Memphis to lead peaceful march. Attempts to renew mediation of strike fail.

Monday, April 1 - Curfew is lifted.

Tuesday, April 2 - Hundreds attend funeral for Larry Payne. National Guard withdrawn.

Wednesday, April 3 - Dr. King returns to Memphis and addresses rally, delivering his “I’ve been to the Mountaintop” address.

Thursday, April 4 - A sniper, later captured and identified as James Earl Ray, assassinates Dr. King as he stands on the balcony outside his room at the Lorraine Hotel.

Friday, April 5 - Federal troops and Atty. Gen. Ramsey Clark are in Memphis as FBI begins international manhunt for assassin. President Johnson instructs Undersecretary of Labor James Reynolds to take charge of mediation to settle the strike.

Saturday, April 6 - Reynolds meets with Mayor Loeb in the first of a long string of meetings-first with one side, then the other, rarely together.

Monday, April 8 - Mrs. King and dozens of national figures lead a peaceful memorial march through downtown in tribute to Dr. King and in support of the strike.

Tuesday, April 9 - Funeral services are held in Atlanta for Dr. King.

Wednesday, April 10 - Reynolds steps up meetings with city and union officials, most without publicity.

Tuesday, April 16 - AFSCME leaders announce that agreement has been reached. The strikers vote to accept it. The strike is over.
This poster depicts the struggle to regain dignity during the 1968 labor strike in Memphis Tennessee.

Figure 8.30 Dignity poster.
The Movement-Southside Neighborhood

I am a Man was the phrase that was used by the workers during the 1968 labor strike.

Figure 8.31 I am a Man poster.
Dr. King was instrumental in not only the labor strike but the entire Civil Rights Movement.

Figure 8.32 Embrace the dream poster.
The people of the delta region of the Mississippi River have played a critical role in growth of Memphis and Mid-South region.

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Claude McKay

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Richard Allen
Beale Street-Southside Neighborhood

Beale Street is one of the most famous streets in Memphis, and it is the soul of old Memphis. Named after an unknown military hero in 1841. Beale Street’s heyday was in the 1920’s, when the area took on a carnival atmosphere where gambling, drinking and voodoo flourished alongside the bustling nightclubs theaters and of course music. Aside from the bustling cotton trade on the cobblestone banks of Front Street along the Mississippi, no other Memphis landmark has held such mystique, intrigue, fame and infamy over the years.

“It first rang out over the cotton fields of the Mississippi Delta. It migrated to the streets and clubs of Memphis. It went on to influence the sound of music all over the world. Memphis is the Home of the Blues and the Birthplace of Rock ‘n Roll. And it all starts here on Beale Street”

— About Beale
“Come what may, there will always be a Beale Street, because Beale Street is a spirit...Beale Street is a symbol...Beale Street is a way of life...Beale Street is a hope.”

—Nat D. Williams

If Beale Street could talk, if Beale Street could talk, Married men would have to take their beds and walk, Except one or two who never drink booze, And the blind man on the corner singing “Beale Street Blues!”

I’d rather be there than any place I know...

- W.C. Handy/Beale Street Blues
I went down to the crossroad, fell down on my knees.
I went down to the crossroad, fell down on my knees.
Asked the lord above "Have mercy, save poor Bob if you please"

— Robert Johnson
In the 1940s and '50s, Highway 61 was the freedom road over which many, many African-Americans traveled north to what they hoped would be a better life. Some found it better; some found it worse. But moving north offered hope, and many went searching.

“The journey of the blues started somewhere outside, somewhere in the heated evening about a century ago. The blues was born in the rich, brown earth of the Delta, a region stretching two hundred miles from the Peabody Hotel in Memphis to the edge of Vicksburg, Mississippi.”
Figure 8.48 Highway 61: Faces of the Delta poster.
Summary of Analysis

- The Civil Rights Museum has the potential to serve the neighborhood with more amenities.
- The block layout does not serve the circulatory needs of the neighborhood.
- Nothing to attract people into the Southside Neighborhood.
- Booker T. Washington Highschool and Vance Jr. High are potential educational catalyst for the neighborhood.
- Highway 61 needs to be revitalized as the neighborhood’s main street.
- Lack of critical mass of pedestrians to support the use of Confederate Park.
- Very limited sidewalks along streets.
- Vance Avenue provides a unique opportunity for redevelopment and connection.
- Streets in this area need streetscape enhancements to provide aesthetic qualities and opportunities for social interaction to occur.
- The FedEx Forum and Beale Street need to be linked to the neighborhood.
- The Arts District can provide a catalytic spark that could teach the residents of the neighborhood about arts, dance, and food.
- The churches located in the neighborhood can serve the spiritual needs of residents through outreach programs.
Design Development: Southside Neighborhood

Chapter Nine
The concept for the Southside Neighborhood can be described as Exfoliation: “revealing the hidden layers”. The project demonstrates how the Southside Neighborhood is a critical piece in Memphis’ urban fabric. It is envisioned in three phases. The first phase is to develop the National Civil Rights Museum area into a campus that celebrates the movement, music, and culture of the neighborhood. The second phase is to reestablish Highway 61 (Third Street) as the neighborhood’s main street. The last phase will consist of enhancing the housing stock and bringing the life of the neighborhood back to the streets.

Figure 9.1 Southside Neighborhood concept diagram.
Goals and Objectives

1. Promote the social, physical and economic well being of the Southside Neighborhood.
   - By providing community based programs that will help serve all age groups.
   - By providing a better housing stock through the revitalization of homes as well as the construction of new ones.
   - By promoting a mixture of income levels within the neighborhood.
   - By promoting local businesses within the neighborhood.

2. Revitalize the Southside Neighborhood as a living memorial to the struggle of the people who fought for civil rights.
   - Reveal the historical layers of the Southside Neighborhood.
   - By rejuvenating Highway 61 and Vance Ave.
   - By developing a campus out of the National Civil Rights Museum
   - By bringing back the historical street structure of the neighborhood to regain street activity.
Figure 9.2 Southside Neighborhood existing conditions.
Figure 9.3 Southside Neighborhood conceptual masterplan.
Figure 9.4 Southside Neighborhood: King Educational Center.
The concept for this design is to celebrate the influences that make up the Southside Neighborhood: the movement, culture, and music.

**Highway 61**
- Bring back the lure and mystery of the blues highway as it travels from the Mississippi delta through the neighborhood to Beale Street.
- Reintroduce music studios along 61 that will cater to aspiring musicians.
- Establish restaurants that celebrate the music and food of the Mid-South and Delta Regions

**King Center**
- Mission: Center is dedicated to the advancement of the legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King, rooted in his teaching of justice, equality, and peace.
- An extension of the Civil Rights Museum. The King Educational Center is a state of the art Community Center that is deeply grounded in Dr. King’s philosophy.
- The center is to develop and disseminate programs that will educate the world about equality, education, and prosperity.
- The center is meant to become part of the national and international network of organizations that promote and complement Dr. King’s vision of the beloved community.

**Community Arts Center/Culinary Institute**
- A place for residents to learn about the arts: painting, sculpture, music and dance.
- The arts center is meant to be a place of cultural fusion
- Housing will be available for artist and musicians who teach and learn at the arts center.
- Local businesses such as hardware, arts supply, culinary supply, and music supply stores will be established around the center.
- The Southside Culinary Institute will serve aspiring chefs and others to learn about the food of the region.

**Civil Rights Memorial Fountain**
- Derived from three key words from the civil rights movement: non-violence, dignity, and longevity.
- The fountain is a testament to the struggle, how far we have come, and where we need to go to achieve equality for all.
- The fountain serves as one of the anchor points for this area, the other being the King Center.
- The materials used in the fountain are smooth and rough cut granite and water. These materials symbolize the adversity that people lived through during the movement.
Figure 9.6 Southside Neighborhood: Vance Ave. Redevelopment.
A great deal of attention was paid to the residential areas within the neighborhood. The following gives a brief description of the elements found in the Vance Ave. Redevelopment.

Street Pattern
- Reintroduces the fine grain texture that the neighborhood once had.
- When driving around the neighborhood people will see how much more permeable the neighborhood is with the smaller blocks.
- Each street is named after leaders of the 1968 Labor strike.
- Each street will have way-finding markers that speak to the various influences on the neighborhood.

Street Activity
- Allow the street to tell the story of the neighborhood.
- Each housing unit will have alternating setback to provide places where people can gather along the street.
- The pedestrian zone between the road and houses will be widened to provide a safer spacious pedestrian corridor along the streets.
- All of the housing units will have either a stoop or a porch. This will extend the life of the life of the house out into the street.

Housing and Community Spaces
- Single family, row and apartment housing provide a range of choices for neighborhood residents.
- Some of the housing will be subsidized to residents who qualify, to promote a mixture of incomes levels in the neighborhood.
- Locally owned businesses will provide some of the economic growth for the neighborhood.
- Community gardens and programs will be run by the neighborhood churches and organizations
- Community Centers will function as places for not only kids, but adults in the neighborhood for physical and mental growth.

Vacant lots will be used to demonstrate that change is coming. This will be done through temporary gardens and open spaces that will be developed into housing for neighborhood residents. Some of the vacant lots will remain open and become neighborhood parks.
Figure 9.8 Southside Neighborhood illustrative drawing: highway 61.
Figure 9.9 Southside Neighborhood illustrative drawing: streetscape improvements.
Figure 9.10 Southside Neighborhood illustrative drawing.
Figure 9.11 Southside Neighborhood illustrative drawing: Civil Rights Memorial fountain.
This thesis began with a look into the need for an alternative redevelopment strategy for American downtowns. The problem with previous redevelopment strategies is that they overlooked the social and physical effects that urban redevelopment can have; thus jeopardizing the vitality of our downtowns. The thesis then introduced the urban catalyst as an alternative means of effective urban revitalization.

The next chapter examined the evolution of the American downtown, the urban catalyst theory, contextual factors, sense of place and authenticity, and market factors. The information assimilated from the literature review led to my position that cities have characteristics that can serve as conceptual models for redevelopment. A process framework was then developed from these findings.

To test the position and framework that was formulated in Chapter 3, two areas in downtown Memphis, Tennessee were selected. Two designs were chosen to show how urban catalysts can differ in terms of economic, social, and physical redevelopment. The first project showed how Court Square, an existing park can become a binding element that also promotes social and spatial equity within the commercial core and adjacent districts. The second project showed how the Southside Neighborhood can fit within the changing structure of Memphis’ urban fabric.
The conclusions developed from this thesis are presented in three sections:
The Design Process
The Value of This Project
Directions for Further Inquiry

The Design Process

The process began with a literature review, which covered a range of topics including the conceptual factors of urban design: morphological, social, functional, perceptual, visual, and temporal. The literature review also studied the role that sense of place and authenticity play in urban catalytic design.

Each section of the literature review revealed key components that support the position that every city has unique attributes that can serve as models for redevelopment. These components were used as a basis for the design framework that guided the design process, as follows:

- Identify areas that are in need of revitalization
- Conduct a comprehensive analysis, through morphological, perceptual, social, visual, functional, and temporal factors
- Identify the unique attributes of the study area—history, culture, recreation etc. Meet with residents of the study area to share the information found to this point.
- Identify project type, list its attributes and check against the characteristics of urban catalyst.
- Check the project checked according to the attributes of sense of place and authenticity:
  - Respond to its setting
  - Possess a spirit that is unique
  - Respond to the needs of the city
  - Integrate place/space and heritage

PURPOSE

The purpose of this project was to demonstrate that urban catalysts can become an effective means of urban revitalization. There were two goals for this thesis. First, was to show how urban catalysts can differ in type, scale, and program, all the while fulfilling the goals of economic, spatial, and social growth. The second was to show how the influences that are derived from the contextual analysis can be the cornerstone for achieving sense of place and authenticity in urban redevelopment. To meet these two goals an extensive literature review was conducted. It was found that the factors that will lead to a successful urban catalytic redevelopment are:

URBAN CATALYST

- Creating pedestrian traffic is the most important way that a project can encourage development.
- The development needs to be properly designed and linked to its surroundings visually and physically.
- A development attracting pedestrian traffic can serve as an amenity even if the pedestrians do not enter it.
- A development’s character integrated with its ability to
complement its context can help create an amenity that spurs development.
- The project must be relevant to its location.

**CONTEXTUAL FACTORS**
- Morphologically, the understanding of block and street layout need to be recognized and enhanced if needed to insure that the circulation framework is functioning properly.
- The overall perceptions of an area need to be noted to understand what perceptual changes need to be made.
- Urban catalysts should provide and enticing visual experience to the area in which it is developed, by using local architecture vernacular in a way that responds to change.
- Urban catalysts should enhance the functionality of an area, not hinder it.
- Catalyst should also respond to the “times” of a place, as a place changes the catalyst should be able to adapt to that change.

**SENSE OF PLACE AND AUTHENTICITY**
- Urban catalysts need to successfully convey a strong sense of place and authenticity. For this to happen a catalyst needs to be rooted in its environment, and respond to its context.
- Catalysts must not ruin their setting it must amplify it.
- Catalysts need to respond not only to the physical features, but also to the social features. This interrelationship plays a vital role in the “sense” of a place.
- Urban catalysts need to respond to the influences that surround it, so that its meaning and function is evolve from place providing an authenticity that comes derived from a real place.

**MARKET FACTORS**
- For urban catalyst to be successful economically there needs to be a strong partnership between the public and private business sectors.
- The local economy, fueled by local business, should be considered in the make up of catalytic developments. It is important that catalyst economically stimulate the areas in which they are developed.

Overall I think my design process model was successful in three ways. First, it was effective in assisting in the identification of the areas that needed to be redeveloped in the city of Memphis. Second, it was effective organizational tool for the contextual analysis, this really aided in my understanding of the complex web of Memphis urban environment. Lastly, the model provided a strong means to evaluate the attributes of my two project sites against the attributes for developing a successful urban catalyst and providing a strong sense of place and authenticity. I do not think my model was effective in taking into account the market factors that effect urban redevelopment.

The design solutions succeeded in demonstrating how both Court Square and
the Southside Neighborhood can become urban catalyst for the city of Memphis. The solutions also successfully demonstrate how urban catalyst can differ from one another in terms of scale, type and program. However, some issues have not been explored due to time constraints. One important aspect was the lack of a case study section in my thesis. Another aspect that would be included in this study would be a community participatory portion consisting of a survey and community meeting to discuss the design project. This would be valuable to gain a better understanding of the study area and people that would be affected by the design and programmatic changes.

As the project conclude the question of “So What?” remains. As cities are changing effective redevelopment strategies need to be developed. Understanding the role that contextual factors, sense of place and authenticity, and market factors have on urban redevelopment is helpful in ensuring that redevelopment projects are derived from the context in which they are developed.

Responding to the contextual influences that have an effect on area, while providing a strong sense of place and authenticity will distinguish catalytic projects from one another. This will also help cities capitalize on the attributes that are true to them, thus fostering redevelopment projects that are informed by their context.
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